

gested. We doubt whether any other writer possesses sufficient command of the authorities to move so freely without stumbling in that dim twilight of the dawn of French history. But all the essays are full of learning and sound instruction.

If there is one of the series from the general views of which we are disposed to dissent, though with great deference for the opinion of one so thoroughly at home in the subject, it is that on "St. Thomas of Canterbury and his Biographers." We cannot help thinking that Mr. Freeman's fondness for St. Thomas a'Becket is a case of what the writers on Primitive Culture call "survival"; that it belongs rather to the earlier and more ecclesiastical portion of the author's career, when he was one of the most eminent among the leaders in the revival of Church Art connected with the High Church movement at Oxford. To us, we confess, Thomas a'Becket has always seemed to stand in strong contrast to the real Saintship of Anselm, and to be himself in truth nothing more than a vulgar embodiment of the sacerdotal ambition and the ecclesiastical fallacies of his age. Thierry has discovered in him a Saxon patriot, defending his race against the Norman oppressor; but this theory is justly pronounced by Mr. Freeman untenable: Becket was not of Saxon but of Norman extraction, and, as Mr. Freeman says, the sharp antagonism of races assumed in Thierry's hypothesis had by this time ceased to exist. Thierry makes a great point of the article in the Constitutions of Clarendon forbidding the ordination of serfs without the consent of their lords, in opposing which he supposes Becket to have been the champion of the Saxon democracy. Milman, on the other hand, has remarked that this article in reality passed almost unheeded. Mr. Freeman disputes Milman's opinion on the strength of some lines in the Metrical French Life of Becket by Garnier. But we have the most positive proof that Thierry has vastly exaggerated the importance of the article and that it was really regarded by Becket's party as of second-rank moment: since at the Council of Sens the sixteen Constitutions of Clarendon were laid before the Pope, who distinguished those which were utterly inadmissible from those which, though objectionable, were comparatively harmless, and placed the article respecting the ordination of serfs in the latter class. What the democratic sympathies of Rome and her representatives were worth appeared not long after this in the Papal condemnation of the Great Charter and its authors. Democratic Rome has, in truth, never been; though in the case of kings who were heretics or opposed her pretensions she has been rebel and tyrannicide. It cannot be pretended again, that Becket was a martyr to religious liberty in the high sense of the term, since as a member of the Council of Tours he took part in setting on foot those persecutions of the heretics of Southern France, which at last culminated in the extermination of the Albigenses. To the liberties of the national Church of England he was twice a traitor: first in allowing himself to be forced on the electors to the Archbishopric, in defiance of Church rights and liberties, by an exercise of the royal power; secondly, in attempting to get rid of this flaw in his position by surrendering the Primacy of England into the hands of the Pope and receiving it back as the Pope's gift, a precedent which was probably not forgotten in the usurping Councils of Innocent III. He was a martyr to nothing but that

Hildebrandine theory of the supremacy of the clergy and of the Pope as their chief over the lay powers and the laity generally, which at this period filled the heads and fired the hearts of all the priests in Europe; which was supported by a whole arsenal of forgery and fraud, as well as by the general agencies of superstition, and which, if it could have been carried into effect, would have reduced Europe to the condition of Egypt, paralyzed intellect, arrested political progress and stopped the current of civilization. The chief object for which he fought was the immunity of clerical robbers and murderers, and of all robbers and murderers over whom the clergy chose, with a view of enlarging their clientage, to extend the protection of their order, from the jurisdiction of secular tribunals, as William of Newburgh, about the only contemporary writer in whom anything like an impartial account of these transactions is to be found, very clearly explains. But it is not to be forgotten that immediately after his appointment to the Archbishopric, and before the Constitutions of Clarendon were mooted, he commenced his course of aggression by setting up tyrannical claims to property which had been vested by a long term of prescription in other hands; at the same time outraging justice by making himself judge in his own cause and violating the established custom of the realm by excommunicating a tenant in chief of the Crown without the cognizance of the King. His bearing through the whole controversy was in the last degree insolent, outrageous and unchristian: even his most attached partizan had to warn him that, instead of always poring over the Canon Law, the magazine of ecclesiastical aggression, he had better turn his mind to the Gospel. He met his death at last by violence, and in this sense he may be said to have been, in Mr. Freeman's words, "a martyr to the general cause of law and order"; but he had himself provoked that violence by launching, immediately after his reconciliation with the King and in breach of the agreement into which he had virtually entered, a storm of censures and excommunications for which Mr. Freeman blames him highly, justly remarking that the amnesty which would naturally have been expected under the circumstances from a secular conqueror, was much more to be expected from a minister of peace. "But," says Mr. Freeman, "in the state of fanatic exaltation into which Thomas had now wrought himself, lenity would have seemed a crime which would incur the curse of Meroz." People in a state of fanatic exaltation are apt, especially in rough times, to run into violent collisions. The conduct and bearing of this ecclesiastical tergiteant made it perfectly clear that there was no living within the same realm with him except on condition of absolute submission to his fanatical and tyrannical will. The last gospel principle in defence of which the servant of Christ launched his anathemas, and to which, if to any principle, he was a martyr, was the supremacy of Canterbury over York, and the exclusive right of the Archbishop of Canterbury to crown and anoint the King. The last word uttered by his saintly lips was "pandar," which provoked the excited savage to whom it was addressed to hew him down. The crazy lust of martyrdom which at last possessed him, and which widely prevailed in that crusading age, might not otherwise have been gratified. We are very much in the dark as to some parts of his character, our chief authorities being his ecclesiastical